

UNDER A DARKENING SKY

King's lagging zeal.¹ But the official invitations of the Pope and the eloquent exhortations of his Augustinian emissary seem frigid and perfunctory, when compared with the fiery-hearted enthusiasm, the white and glowing passion, with which Catherine threw herself into the undertaking.

From the house of the Buonconti, she despatched letters and messengers in all directions, to princes and rulers of republics, to captains of mercenaries and to private citizens alike, urging each in his own degree to support the papal design, and to be ready to lay down his life for the Cross when the summons should come. One of the first to whom she appealed was Queen Giovanna of Naples, whose ambiguous character and dangerous position stirred her imagination and excited her compassion. In words of touching tenderness, the maiden of the people implores the daughter of kings, who had won from men the title of *regina meretrix* to repent and amend her life, thereby becoming "a true and perfect daughter of God," to contemplate the ineffable love that God bears her, and plant the tree of the Cross in the garden of her soul. *^e Rise up, then, manfully, sweetest sister ! It is no longer time for sleep, for time sleeps not, but ever passes like the wind. For love's sake, lift up the standard of the most holy Cross in your heart. Soon must we uplift it, for, as I understand, the Holy Father will proclaim the war against the Turks. And, therefore, I pray you to make ready, so that we may all go together to die for Christ. I beseech and urge you, in the name of Christ crucified, to support His Spouse in her need, with your possessions, your person, and your counsel ; in all that is possible, show yourself a faithful daughter of sweet and holy Church." ² And to Bartolommeo di Smeduccio, the tyrant of San Severino in the Marches, a young condottiere whose growing reputation as a soldier was giving him a power and importance far beyond that derived from the forces actually at his disposal, she wrote : " Let your heart and soul be enkindled in Christ sweet Jesus, with love and desire of paying Him back for so much love by giving life

¹ Brief of October 27, 1375. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

² Letters 133 (312) and 138 (314).